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DEMOGRAPHIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS: PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION: QUALITATIVE ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Case studies carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and on preparations for the planned international statistical meeting on indicators of patterns of consumption

Report of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

SUMMARY

In resolution 40/179, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on patterns of consumption and related socio-economic indicators. It considered that an accurate assessment of advances in living standards required reliable measuring instruments related to living conditions, employment and the circumstances underlying them. In compliance with that request, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) commissioned a number of country case studies to examine these issues in national contexts. At its twenty-fifth session, the Statistical Commission recommended, inter alia, that countries develop pertinent methods of collection, processing, analysis and dissemination of data, that new indicators be devised and that, apart from the use of household surveys, innovative methods of collecting and processing data be explored. It also requested that a final report on the case studies and other work undertaken by the

* E/CN.3/1991/1.

Research Institute be prepared for the Commission's consideration at its twenty-sixth session. The present report is based on country case studies for Côte d'Ivoire, India, Kenya and Morocco, together with commentary by UNRISD on principal results and conclusions. (Copies of the case studies are available on request to members of the Statistical Commission from the Institute in their original languages.)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The present report, prepared by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), is in partial fulfilment of requests made by the General Assembly (resolutions 40/179 and 44/234) and the Economic and Social Council (resolutions 1987/6 and 1989/4), and of recommendations made by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth sessions 1/ for an enquiry into "qualitative indicators of development". Information from four country case studies that were carried out for the project is presented (Côte d'Ivoire, India, Kenya and Morocco). Additional information and commentary by the Institute has been included, as judged appropriate. The number of case studies is smaller than originally intended and narrower in geographical coverage owing to limitation of resources. The subject of indicators on patterns of consumption was previously considered by the Commission at its twenty-third and twenty-fourth sessions (E/CN.3/1987/16 and E/CN.3/1989/14), on the basis of reports of the Secretary-General and UNRISD. The latter report included a summary of the responses to a letter circulated by the Secretariat to Governments in 1988 requesting their views on the topic.

2. The project on qualitative indicators of development, as set forth in the resolutions and recommendations, is broadly conceived and intended to serve the following purposes:

(a) Help orient national development and support international co-operation by helping Governments to formulate and follow policies better geared to the well-being of the population;

(b) Promote the evaluation of progress;

(c) Promote the application of concerted objectives;

(d) Provide early warnings regarding conditions that demand attention and action.

3. As one of the country case studies notes, the same indicators may not equally serve the different purposes. The monitoring of progress over time requires a strict comparability and consistency in definition and data collection methods; this can make it difficult to apply, to monitoring, improvements in definition and data collection methods adopted in work serving other purposes.

I. THE MEANING OF "QUALITATIVE INDICATORS"

4. While "qualitative" is often used in the social sciences in opposition to "quantitative", it is not so understood in this project. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/4, the concern here is with "numerical indicative objectives" and "the adequate level of satisfaction of basic economic and social-cultural needs in regard to food, housing, clothing, education, health care and necessary social services". Typical qualitative indicators are here taken to be indicators that give the percentage of the population (or of a

population group such as children or women) having or not having a defined quality, such as literacy, or meeting or not meeting a given standard of adequacy with regard to some condition of living such as food consumption. Indicators may show not only the percentage falling below a given standard but also how far below they fall; or they may simply yield a distribution along a scale with the adequacy level left for subsequent decisions. In practice, the relevant indicators are much the same as those employed in measurement of levels of living, basic needs, social development or human development.

II. DATA SOURCES FOR QUALITATIVE INDICATORS

5. Statistical data for the indicators under study are derived primarily from three main sources: administrative records and registrations; censuses; and sample surveys, especially household sample surveys. Indicators for which data may be collected by one data collection method may not be obtainable by other methods or not obtainable in satisfactory form. Different methods of data collection may give quite different quantitative results for the same indicator in the same country or area (as may, also, different methods of estimation in the absence of direct data). This will be illustrated below from country studies. Unfortunately there is in general relatively little scientific validation of quantitative results in this field - validation, that is, by tests comparing results obtained for a particular indicator, using a particular method of data collection for a given group, with facts known independently about the test group. While complete assurance of the superior accuracy of one method over others can not be claimed, indirect considerations (including the known quality of the collection machinery) may suggest that one method will probably give better results in a particular situation than another. Variations within the same method, such as variations in ways of measuring literacy by tests or variations in wordings of sample survey questions about consumption, can also produce significantly different results, with questions of validity left unanswered.

A. Administrative records and registrations

6. Certain statistics from administrative records and registrations are relatively inexpensive and may be readily available in developing countries for measuring living conditions. Unfortunately, they are the statistics most likely to be seriously inaccurate or to dictate the use of indicators of poor quality. Conventional vital statistics registrations systems which yield good indicators (of infant mortality and other age-specific mortality rates), are incomplete in most developing countries. None of the case studies suggests their use for obtaining data on basic health indicators. "Hospital beds per 10,000 population" is an example of a widely available health indicator that is also of poor quality because of the geographical maldistribution of hospitals and inaccessibility to lower-income categories of the population. The unreliability of hospital records has also been noted in the case studies. In education, one of the most commonly used indicators derived from administrative statistics - namely, school enrolment as a percentage of school-age population - is sharply criticized in two of the case studies for inflated and vacillating figures and for mistaken assumptions about the ages of children enroling in the schools.

7. Although administrative records and registrations, which are designed for purposes other than the measurement and monitoring of living conditions, are frequently fallible, the collection of statistics by those techniques can often be improved. This may involve restructuring the method of collection. In India a sample registration system, combining sampling of areas with carefully supervised registration, has been established for two decades, with apparently successful results.

8. As described in the India case study, a number of villages (or parts of villages, if the population exceeds 2,000) and urban blocks are selected. In each, data on births, deaths and marriages are collected by a local part-time registrar (e.g., a teacher). Independently a supervisor conducts every six months a survey of households to collect the same data. The results are then compared and discrepancies removed, as possible. As of 1987, 4,149 villages and 1,873 urban blocks were included in the scheme, which provides vital rates at the national and state levels and for a small number of natural sub-areas within most of the states. As a result, India is one of the few countries that, without a comprehensive vital registration scheme, can supply reliable vital data on an annual basis.

9. It has been suggested in the literature that greater use might be made of available administrative and registration statistics by compiling systematic inventories of relevant community facilities and mapping their distribution in a country. This could involve use of available information on electricity, telephones, postal facilities, transport facilities, health facilities, education facilities etc. It is reported in the India case study, for example, that data of those kinds were collected in specified sample registration areas in 1979.

B. Censuses

10. Censuses have the advantage of covering the entire population and permit numerous kinds of breakdowns of data (if the data are appropriately tagged). This permits identification of groups in special need when relevant questions are asked. Censuses provide the necessary informational basis for many indicators that, by their structure, require knowledge of the size of the total population (e.g., all per capita indicators) or knowledge of the size of one or another population subcategory, such as school-age populations in educational indicators, labour force populations in employment indicators etc. They also provide a background framework for sampling procedures in sample surveys. Information on population, particularly population structure, in successive censuses is a basis for making estimates of values on age-specific mortality indicators and life expectation when more direct data are lacking. Studies using census data often take a random sample for examination.

11. On the negative side, censuses are taken only every 10 years or so, sometimes less often, and four or five years may be required to process and publish the results. Censuses are quite unsuitable as a source of information on indicators that may change significantly within the course of a few years. Furthermore, censuses are generally overloaded and, thus not able, on a regular basis, to take

on a substantial number of items related to qualitative indicators. The Kenya study reports that the 1979 population census in that country, although relatively unambitious, has not yet been published in full; the third volume is still to be issued, and the fourth volume, on socio-economic issues, has in fact been abandoned because its production conflicted with preparations for the 1989 census. Very often censuses do not have the trained staff to deal with social-indicator questions, particularly at the field level. Yet, while censuses do not generally cover the range of information needed for assessing and monitoring social development, they still play an indispensable role, and the increased number of countries conducting censuses in recent years has considerable significance for the measurement of living conditions.

C. Sample surveys

12. Sample surveys, especially household sample surveys, have long been regarded as the most promising approach to the measurement of human well-being. The sample survey is flexible and has the capacity to deal with a range of topics in successive rounds and to cover a fair number of different items in the same round, permitting study of interrelations. It is more manageable and cheaper than a census, and on a number of items it is considered to be more accurate.

13. The flexibility of a sample survey permits a variety of different approaches in data collection, separately or in combination: specific factual questions to respondents; questions soliciting opinions, attitudes or general evaluations of adequacy of living conditions; direct observations of adequacy or deficiency in various items by trained interviewers or accompanying experts; direct measurements, e.g., of living space, weight of food consumed (favoured some years ago but in practice found to be too cumbersome) and children's height and weight in relation to each other and to age (a more recent popular approach to nutrition measurement).

14. Yet sample surveys also have their problems when used to gather information on indicators of living conditions - problems and difficulties that do not invalidate the method but call for a very careful approach in the planning, pre-testing, executing and analysing stages.

15. A national or regional sample survey should give appropriate representation to all population groups, but in practice coverage of people living in places of difficult access (jungles, mountains, forests, swamps, river deltas etc. - that is, places that cannot be reached by interviewers' Jeeps plus a short walk) is often incomplete. Shanty towns can also be difficult to cover, as can people without fixed dwellings in the city or countryside, and nomadic populations. (Nomadic people are generally not included in Kenyan surveys.) The population groups escaping coverage, however, are likely to have some of the more serious deficiencies in living conditions and should therefore receive more rather than less the usual attention.

16. Since the sample size required to obtain results within an acceptable range of probable error varies but little with the size of the population being sampled, a national sample survey (with the same amount of disaggregation) absorbs a much larger proportion of the financial and human resources of a country of small population than of a country of large population at an equivalent level of development. Furthermore, a survey of the population of a given region within a country requires either almost as large a sample as the overall national sample (if done separately) or a substantial increase in the national sample so that the regional sample will reach the necessary size. The same is true of surveying subgroups of the population. A very large - generally an impractically large - sample is needed in the case of an indicator like the infant mortality rate, which should be based on a representative sample of infants born within a given year (with the number of births related to a relatively rare event - infant death - that has high variability).

17. A final problem of sample surveys is the fact that the respondents may answer inaccurately, owing to their failure to understand the question (or to their understanding it in a way different from that of the surveyors) or to a desire to please the interviewer, portray themselves in a good light or appear in need of assistance etc.

18. Such inaccuracies in responses appear to be particularly a problem in the case of questions that involve a time frame and a reliance on memory: what the respondent or his family ate during the past week or month or year or earned as income; the frequency of use of health services; the number of infants that died during the last year etc. In recent controlled experiments where actual food consumption and actual use of health services were known and recorded, conspicuous failure to recall food consumption accurately over a period of more than a day or so or to recall correctly the frequency of the use of health services has been demonstrated. People in such experiments have been found not only to forget what (and how much) they did eat but also to recall eating things that they, in fact, did not eat. Moderate improvements in recall have been made by adapting the method of questioning to the ways of thinking and of effective remembering of the subjects. Nevertheless, in general, there are reasons for uneasiness about the widespread use of recall questions in household sample surveys when used without pre-testing and validation.

19. Although national sample surveys encounter difficulties in carrying out extensive disaggregations in situations of limited resources (see below) and are therefore not easy to use for studying disadvantaged groups, they can readily be used for monitoring purposes. The object in monitoring is to capture change. Usually this is done by comparing answers supplied at two or more points in time. The same questions can be asked in successive rounds of household surveys. Changes that have occurred in the household over the previous 12 months can also be ascertained directly. As regards employment, for example, household members can be asked whether they have lost their job or found one within the year, whether the remuneration has changed. They can be asked whether a child who was enrolled at school has withdrawn from school (it is reported in the Côte d'Ivoire case study, for example, that parents had withdrawn their children from school because there were now fewer opportunities for urban employment). As suggested in the Morocco

case study, a question might be added also on changes in general satisfaction of the kind: "Do you consider that you are now better or worse off, or about the same as a year ago?", and if the answer is "better" or "worse", the reasons are ascertained.

D. Data overload, costs and innovative techniques

20. The case studies, particularly for India and Kenya, point out the problems of data overload in household sample surveys that involve extensive disaggregation and/or the use of long questionnaires (some in India taking five hours of interviewing). The resulting data masses are difficult to record, process and report in a reasonable time, especially for countries with limited staff and facilities. The Statistical Office of Kenya, which expanded its coverage by extensive regional and district disaggregation, fell far behind in processing data and getting out reports. Reports on surveys covering questions related to indicators of the well-being of the population have been seriously delayed or given up. Some were five years before reaching publication; others have still not been published after seven years. The goal of up-to-date information to guide policy was not achieved. Policy makers in the Government in fact tend to use informal channels of information to get up-to-date intelligence.

21. India, faced by heavy data masses, has experimented with summary questions in which a large number of data items are replaced by one or a small number of items. For example, in order to reduce the complexities, costs and delays of long questionnaires that seek to determine the composition of total food consumption and the amount of each item consumed, (unless of course the detailed information is required for purposes other than progress monitoring), a single question will relate to the adequacy of food consumption in the past year.

22. In other countries there is a movement towards what is called "light surveys", using questionnaires of limited length in the annual rounds, along the lines of the World Bank's "priority" schedule. This is the approach proposed by the Direction de la statistique of Morocco. The new arrangement will complement the detailed surveys of consumption and household expenditure which take place every 10 years. A twofold approach, which derives from the experience of data needs for planning and other administrative purposes, is proposed in the study of Côte d'Ivoire - a first phase of "light surveys", followed, as necessary and appropriate, by in-depth surveys in selected "sentinel areas".

23. The light surveys would contain only the most essential data items and would use summary questions to confine the schedule to a reasonable length. The sample would be large enough, however, to give adequate results compatible with the required degree of disaggregation so that the key groups would be adequately covered. The frequency for some items would be annual, in order to provide information as recent as possible, with a lesser frequency for items that change slowly. The results of the light survey could in part serve as "warning signals" (in the words of the Côte d'Ivoire study). Problems signaled by the light surveys would be dealt with, as appropriate, by in-depth studies in the sentinel areas. The problems would be described and studied in detail by means of lengthy probes,

observations and measurements. This technique of intensively covering small areas has been explored in several investigations. Since most household surveys are organized in at least two stages, one of which is the village, or urban, block stage, the sentinel areas could correspond to this earlier stage. A small, carefully selected number of areas would suffice.

24. Sentinel areas can also be used to obtain information in complex fields, such as urban slums, in relation to informal sector activities, or in respect of items where routine survey questions appear inappropriate. This information might cover certain problems that critically affect living conditions, such as environmental degradation, alcoholism, drug abuse, or multiple employment.

25. Innovative "sentinel posts" or "observation areas" have now been tested in several countries, including India (where the project in Kerala was originated by UNRISD). They have sought to obtain in-depth information while, at the same time, fitting into the overall state system of information collection in use for development policy. An underlying assumption of UNRISD work in this field has been that social development needs to be understood in terms of forces at work at the local level, not solely in terms of aggregate indicators interacting as abstractions at the national level in complex models.

26. Other examples of innovative and possibly low-cost methods of data collection include the systematic use of key informants, as at the International Labour Organisation (in the case of employment markets); greater use of community (rather than household or individual) data, as in the mapping of facilities mentioned above; and the work initiated at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund on food surveillance.

27. The World Bank, in its Living Standards Measurement Studies, has equipped each team of field workers with a vehicle in order to ensure high mobility between sample localities and with micro processors so that data can be entered and verified immediately, thus avoiding congestion at the central office. Reports on the effectiveness of this procedure should provide interesting information.

III. INDICATORS

28. Most indicators of living conditions - particularly those using readily available data - are indirect approximations rather than direct measurements. For example, indicators of the health status of the population include indicators of presumed causes of good health: percentage of GDP or the governmental budget spent on health, the number of doctors or hospital beds in relation to population, percentage of rural population covered by rural health services, the number of children vaccinated for specific diseases etc. Or they may measure the presumed consequences of good health or bad health: life expectancy, infant mortality rate etc. Indicators can, however, also be fairly direct measures, showing the percentage of the population or population group actually having a given quality or condition of life. Doctors, supported by laboratories, can in principle assess the extent of morbidity in a sample population by health examinations, or a household

survey can ask directly about sickness in the household. In education, literacy, which is a part of the educational condition, can be directly tested or simply asked about. In housing, the percentage of the population without adequate housing can be directly observed in a survey.

29. Other things being equal - the less direct the measurement, the poorer the indicator. For example, the amount of money spent on health by Governments or by households appears to be a very poor indicator (partly because of problems of defining health expenditures, partly because of ambiguities as to whether higher expenditure implies greater good health or greater bad health or just greater income). Other things, however, are not equal and direct assessments can be undesirable. Thus the direct assessment of morbidity by medical personnel in a household sample survey, while in principle an excellent way of assessing health, in practice is very expensive and places demands on scarce medical personnel and equipment. Moreover surveyors hesitate to question household respondents directly on sickness in the household. This is a situation that calls for testing the accuracy of data from direct questions and experimentation with different wordings of such questions.

A. Problems of variation in indicators

30. The Côte d'Ivoire and the India studies maintained that the indicators need not be the same for all parts of a country but, for practical and conceptual reasons, could vary - as between urban and rural, formal and informal, monetization and subsistence - or simply between regions. (They also need not be the same for all countries: the study of Côte d'Ivoire noted the indiscriminate application of concepts suitable for monetary, high technology societies to rural subsistence economies. This can result in procrustean situations where, for the sake of uniformity, the socio-economic reality of the local society is forced into a conceptual model that it does not fit.)

31. The study of Côte d'Ivoire calls attention to the problem of unemployment. In the city it is measured in terms of modern occupations, by such items as number of people on unemployment relief or getting unemployment insurance payments or the number officially registered as unemployed and looking for a job, which in the traditional country setting of small family farms, do not apply or must be re-defined and measured in a wholly different way. The Morocco study emphasizes the fact that the same indicator item may change in importance in different contexts. Water supply in the house or close to the house is an important requirement in the city, but in some country areas fetching water from the communal spring is tied in with the social life of the community so that having water in the house or yard is not regarded as so important.

B. Technical standards and subjective assessments

32. The Moroccan study in general takes the position that qualitative indicators should be based essentially on assessments or opinions of the population involved (or a representative sample). This raises a complex issue, affecting some

indicators more than others. Is adequacy of housing, for example, better measured by expressed satisfaction/dissatisfaction of those who live in the houses, and the reasons for their dissatisfaction, or by technical standards of adequacy established by a governmental office (space per person, composition of roof, walls, and floor, sanitary and other facilities)? Items of major importance to those living in the houses might not be covered by technical standards of the kind mentioned. There are problems and needs that technical and professional people can know about but on which local populations cannot be assumed to have informed opinions, such as various kinds of water pollution and associated health dangers. There are also, however, conditions which the inhabitants are better placed to identify and evaluate. Wherever possible and relevant, it would seem desirable to get data on adequacy/inadequacy in relation to both technical standards and popular assessments.

33. The "one shot" questions mentioned above as being tested in India are in effect "subjective" consumer judgements. The tests relate to food consumption and household expenditure. Alternative methods to subjective assessment, in these cases, are mostly based on recall of specifics in a time-frame. As noted above, however, recall data coming from memory may be quite wrong. Answers to specific detailed questions about food consumption or monetary income are not objective "hard facts" in contrast to answers in the form of general assessments. There is some evidence to suggest that while specific items of food consumption (and presumably other kinds of consumption) tend to be poorly remembered, broader questions on the kinds of foods generally consumed tend to be more accurately answered.

C. Number of indicators

34. A practical matter concerning indicators is the number of them that should be selected to measure a given component. If the purpose, as assumed in this study, is to collect not all the statistics needed for the work of governmental departments but only those needed to get an overall picture of the status, distribution and change of living conditions in the country, then the selection of a limited number of high quality indicators is preferable, in view of the costs of lengthy questionnaires and the dangers of data congestion. It may be necessary to guard against the tendency of operational departments to seek to measure their own operations and programmes rather than progress in relevant conditions of living of the population. It may also be necessary to resist the temptation to propose indicators to meet every possible interest, thereby achieving general support but ending up with an unmanageable agenda for action - and with many indicators of poor quality.

35. The number of better quality indicators that a country can profitably use will be limited by its data collection capacities.

D. Health indicators

1. Mortality rates

36. Age-specific mortality data - for example, under one year (infant mortality rate), and years one through four, along with life expectancy rates at zero, one or five years - are probably the best indicators of health at the present time. The principal sources are vital registration systems and direct or indirect estimates based on sample surveys or censuses. Unfortunately, relatively complete vital registrations (covering at least 90 per cent of the population) are not very frequently found in the developing countries. Sample registration, as described above, has been undertaken in only two or three countries. Data are often obtained from sample surveys in which women are asked to relate the history of births and deaths in their lifetime or to report births and deaths over the previous 12 months. Indirect estimates of age-specific mortality are also made on the basis of questions in surveys related to vital events in the previous 12 months and by making use of standard life tables. The population census also provides data on the basis of which estimates may be made, although only at long intervals.

37. Procedures for obtaining direct data on age-specific mortality rates from sample surveys are subject, as noted above, to recall error and require very large samples, especially if the figures are to be disaggregated. The indirect estimates from sample surveys and censuses involve, among other things, the risk that the standard life tables used in the calculations may not be appropriate to the population studied.

38. The conclusion that countries lacking a comprehensive and reliable system of vital registration cannot accurately and regularly report on changing fertility or mortality is reflected in the Kenya report:

> "What is required in the absence of a reliable and comprehensive system of vital registration is a degree of accuracy in the reporting of live births that is extremely difficult to achieve ... The direct estimates have to be substantially adjusted ..."

39. Quality of the data in Kenya is a key issue. Comparison of different sources for infant mortality rates gave inconsistent results: 89, 96 and 104 deaths per 1,000 births.

40. The India study describes how mortality data are evaluated and how estimates from various sources are compared. Child mortality rates from the sample registration scheme were found to be 20-25 per cent higher than figures estimated on the basis of the population census. Similarly, another source writes:

> "Both infant and overall mortality rates have been seriously underestimated in the National Sample Survey. It is generally felt that underestimation of vital rates in the NSS is not due to conceptual deficiencies or defects in the instructions given to the investigators. The basic reason seems to be underreporting of the events by the respondents owing to memory lapse and failing to place correctly the occurrence of the events in relation to the

moving reference period of one year. ... The death rates would rise by 25 to 30 per cent if the preceding three months were taken as the reference period (compared to the 12 months period actually used)." 2/

41. In general, it is at best possible through sample surveys to obtain rough magnitudes of child and other mortality rates that may distinguish between population groups or areas at the extremes of the range. Minor differences tend to be obscured by sampling and non-sampling errors. Overall average annual change in infant mortality rates (with wide individual variation) is now estimated to be of the order of from two to three points in sub-Saharan Africa. It requires a very sensitive operation to detect changes of this order of magnitude for national totals, not to speak of groups within the country, over and above the "random noises" of various error sources.

42. The estimates of mortality and life expectation now widely issued by the international community are not very usable for monitoring changes. For many of the developing countries, they are from models, based generally on either the decennial census or the occasional demographic survey or a survey containing demographic elements. In some countries, where neither recent registrations nor estimates from censuses or surveys have yielded data, the figures may be estimated from those of neighbouring countries. In construction of time series, data may be updated from a given (sometimes far distant) point of reference, or back-dated, by assuming a rate of change so that the figures issued reflect in many cases the assumption rather than the observed reality.

43. In spite of critical comments on existing mortality data, there is general agreement in the country case studies that age-specific mortality - particularly child mortality - is a necessary indicator in a monitoring system. Further experimentation by individual countries or the international community along the lines of the Indian sample registration system would seem a promising source of more accurate and reasonably rapid data.

2. Morbidity rates

44. Morbidity rates should be ideal indicators of health. The levels and kinds of morbidity can in principle be captured through questions in sample surveys relating to presence of illness, absence from normal activity due to illness, duration of the illness and identification of symptoms or diseases. The quality of the data depends on how the questions are formulated and how they are understood by respondents. (Use of a relatively brief reference period - no more than two weeks - is usually recommended.) Results also depend on the training of the interviewers. Evaluations have shown that even in the best of conditions the validity and reliability of the information is uncertain, so that only relatively large magnitudes of change or of differences among groups are significant. Identification of the actual disease in surveys is rarely feasible. Trained medical staff would be required, together with a variety of apparatus and laboratory facilities and the cost is usually prohibitive. Lay investigators can reasonably attempt to identify diseases only where the symptoms are well known (as in measles or chicken pox, for example). Even then only large changes in patterns of disease can be reliably reported.

45. Data on the extent and rates of morbidity can sometimes be obtained from patterns of illness presented at health facilities. In most developing countries, however, the population coverage by health facilities is incomplete, and records are not very reliable. In the Côte d'Ivoire, the incidence of the principal endemic diseases such as malaria, chicken pox and bilharzia is recommended as an indicator. No disaggregation would be possible by socio-economic groups, however.

3. Availability of health care

46. The data series on health care recommended in the case studies include immunization, maternal health care registration, access to primary health services and availability of drugs. Access and availability would be judged in terms of distance and cost. The precise indicators may depend on local conditions. Examples of indicators cited as possibilities are the following: the proportion of children at risk fully immunized against the major infectious diseases of childhood which can be prevented by immunization; the proportion of households within a given distance (in travel time) from a suitably equipped primary health care centre; the proportion of households at risk able to purchase required drugs or obtain them free of charge. In the India study, sample surveys are proposed as the most suitable ways to identify access to health care services, particularly if socio-economic (income) groups are to be distinguished.

47. Availability is not identical with actual use. In relation to administrative records as a source, the Kenya study notes:

> "Their accessibility and use (of health care facilities) is heavily concentrated among higher income groups. Thus, knowing that some provinces, and even some districts, are much better served ... does not enable one to identify the relative availability of such facilities ... for those in need."

48. Commonly used measures such as ratios of medical personnel and of beds to population, disaggregated by geographical areas and related to population size, could perhaps serve as a first indication of access but, as emphasized in the India study, problems remain of defining needs and what is meant by a "bed" and whether it is attended by medical personnel.

E. Food and nutrition

1. Food consumption

49. The most widely published indicator on food consumption, "per capita calories consumption per day", is a construction out of economic data (often using rough estimates) on food production, food imports and exports, storage, losses and waste etc., with the net total converted into calories. It does not show the percentage of the population falling below a level of adequacy in food consumption and cannot be used to identify areas or population groups in special need, except very roughly. It is, however, a valuable background item, representing a best estimate of supply in relation to population size.

50. Data on kinds, quantities and prices of foods purchased, as obtained from household food expenditure surveys or from overall household expenditure or budget surveys, provide a quite different approach. Such surveys rest on the assumption that significant amounts of the non-purchased foods that are consumed - locally home-grown or community-grown foods, supplementary foods from fishing, hunting and gathering, food provided by employers or patrons, gifts or exchanges of foods, etc. - are taken into proper account.

51. More direct food consumption surveys ask how much food of what kind has been consumed in a given period, perhaps with guidance of a list of foods. They do not get into questions of expenditures.

52. Complications arise from consumption surveys of both types because of variations in food consumption over time: seasonal variations especially in rural areas, and variations during the month if households depend on a once-a-month payment of wages. To deal with these problems of consumption variability, questions may be asked about purchase or consumption over a year; or repeat visits to the same households may be scheduled in order to get a representative sample of meals over time (an expensive procedure); or interviews in an area may be scheduled for the different households to be covered at different times of month and year.

53. A final problem besetting practically all food consumption surveys is that of inaccuracy of recall, as discussed above. This is a field where experimentation would be desirable: for example, on satisfactory ways in which families on pre-selected dates could note or record their food consumption, without having their food behaviour changed by the process of observation and reporting.

54. Present methods of food consumption surveys have been found to yield complicated and profuse data. The case study of Kenya states:

> "It is extremely costly and difficult to do household surveys producing data on food intake, income distribution and poverty. It was a difficult enough task to do this on a scale that would allow provincial disaggregation for rural smallholder areas, in 1974/75. It is a much more difficult task to do it on a scale that allows district level disaggregation, as has been attempted for 1981/82." 3/

55. There has been an interest recently in trying to simplify food consumption surveys. One approach has been to use only a small number of selected, critical food items which constitute the staple diet locally. Methods of this kind, aimed at avoiding the complications and costs of large-scale consumption surveys, are discussed in the India case study. One example is the use of per capita household consumption of cereals which is a

> "direct and very sensitive index of the movements in real living standards in a low-income agrarian economy like India. ... a reasonably short schedule can be developed for the purpose of getting a reliable estimate of per capita quantity of cereals consumed. A short schedule would considerably reduce the time required to collect this pointed information and can be canvassed by investigators with some minimal training."

For poorer households, an increase in cereals would be progress.

56. Asking questions of a general nature about food consumption has also been the object of experimentation in India. In the thirty-eighth round of the National Sample Survey (1983), respondents were asked whether they had in the past 12 months regularly had two "square" meals a day. A preliminary conclusion is that "subjectively perceived hunger ... is not as widespread as the incidence of poverty on the basis of the poverty line". The use and the implications for social measurement of this or similar questions are being studied in greater detail.

57. In Côte d'Ivoire also, simple questions are proposed in relation to nutrition, such as the number of meals per day or the number of households able to ensure special food to children under five, but these have not been tested.

2. Nutrition status

58. Weight and height measurement of children under five, separated by sex and age, at least in selected areas or for selected groups, is probably the most feasible means at present of tracing changes in nutritional status over time. This is so in spite of problems with data collection and interpretation. Thus, low weight or low height may be associated with illness as well as malnutrition, or it may have a (partial) genetic basis. Young children covered may not be representative of the rest of the population. As noted in both the Côte d'Ivoire study and the India study, some kinds of malnutrition would not be indicated by low weight or height. The Kenya study mentions several problems in tracing change over time, among them the need, because of seasonal variation, to spread the measurement over the year or to conduct the measurement each year at the same time. The Kenya study also reports that anthropometric surveys of children have proved valuable in Kenya and have had a substantial impact on policy.

59. It may be noted that according to the India study the highest frequency of clinical evidence of malnutrition was not found in the households having the lowest food consumption expenditure.

F. Clothing

60. None of the case studies deals with clothing, except for the proposal in the Moroccan case study to ask respondents about their purchase of and satisfaction with clothing. The possession of footwear would seem to be the best single indicator in this field. The use of shoes by children outside the house can be critical in order to avoid worm infestation in areas of high density of settlement and without proper sanitation and also in the areas surrounding schools without sanitary facilities. However, even this indicator is beset with problems of definition, dependency on environment, etc. The most likely source of data is a sample survey. (A question on footwear, however, has been included in censuses, as in Mexico.)

G. Housing and related services

61. Rapid urbanization in most developing countries has drawn attention to problems of housing that have always existed in many rural areas - namely, the absence of clean drinking water, sanitary facilities and facilities for the disposal of waste, and the prevalence of sub-standard (fragile, damp, unlighted) dwellings, with high densities of occupation. Additional urban problems are the crowding of houses in urban shanty towns or urban slums generally, the problems of often high rentals and the often long distances between work and home, with inadequate transportation (often a problem in rural areas also, but less visible there).

62. Somewhat different indicators are recommended in the case studies for urban and rural areas. In urban areas in Côte d'Ivoire, as in so many other countries, the problem is to find a dwelling solidly constructed (as distinct from the shanty-type) at a reasonable rental. (Reasonable rental is a popularly expressed concern.) The appropriate indicators relate to the materials of which a dwelling is constructed (roof, walls and floor), along with the amount of the rent. In the India report there is reference to the fact that some housing requirements differ between the colder north, where more solid houses are needed, and the warmer south. Although in practice the indicators are the same throughout India, climate must be considered in interpreting the figures. The implications of having flimsy houses are different in a hot from those in a cold climate.

63. The source of the figures on housing conditions would normally be sample surveys. Change in housing conditions tends to be relatively slow, particularly in rural areas, but more rapid in towns. The periodicity of reporting might thus depend on the locality.

64. In some countries, an indicator of homelessness is suggested. The homeless constitute a problem which has been particularly remarked upon in India and, as regards children, in some Latin American countries. Figures reported in the India study suggest that homelessness is by no means confined to the large towns but is a problem also in rural areas. The proportion of homeless should be an additional indicator if national conditions warrant. In Indian conditions, decennial figures would probably suffice, and the census could be an appropriate source.

65. As regards housing facilities, indicators should include the proportion of households with access (in terms of locally defined distances) to safe potable water in adequate quantities and to sanitary facilities. In some places an indicator of access to fuel would be desirable, but none is recommended as feasible in the case studies. The most practical source is household surveys.

H. Education

66. The indicators of educational status included in the case studies are literacy, highest level of education attained, and school enrolment related to specific age groups. (Combined primary and secondary school enrolments related to the appropriate age group are proposed in the Kenya study in preference to either primary or secondary ratios separately.) Attendance as well as enrolment is used in India. Overall literacy or the educational attainment rate or even the combined enrolment rate are not very sensitive to annual change. Adult literacy programmes apart, the literacy rate changes as the result of the elderly illiterates dying and the younger, better educated taking their place. Enrolment from one year to the next depends largely on what happens at the marginal ages (at normal school entry and departure). The indicator of literacy recommended in the Côte d'Ivoire study for regular measurement is that of the younger age groups, say 15-24, unless there is reason to suspect that adult literacy has changed significantly. Another indicator considered useful in the India case study is the proportion of households with at least one member literate.

67. The principal source of the data on literacy (for a recent date and disaggregated) could be a census or household survey. It is thought that a carefully applied test is preferable to a simple question. But even a test is subject to complications if the spoken language differs from the written language. It would have to be administered to each person in a household above a given age (usually 15 or more) or in a given age range (e.g. 15-24).

68. Most developed countries that have had compulsory education for many years do not measure literacy but simply assume it to be about 99 per cent. When a developed country does do a careful literacy survey, it may find to its surprise that its literacy rate is some points below 99. One explanation appears to be that some children can go through a number of years of schooling without really becoming literate; also some who have gained literacy can lapse into illiteracy. Differences of rates between developed countries that undertake careful surveys and those that do not (but use the 99 per cent assumption) should not be taken too seriously in international comparisons.

69. For developing countries, cross-national comparisons are even more questionable. Different sources, national and international, publish strikingly different rates in a number of cases. The main problems here are:

(a) Some countries use a different age range from others (e.g., 10-45 years, which gives a higher rate than 15 plus, the most commonly used age range);

(b) Some countries test literacy in the official national language only, while others attempt to cover the mother tongue also;

(c) The majority of current rates of literacy in developing countries are estimates based on a census or survey conducted some years back (sometimes many years back), updated by use of subsequent school enrolment figures which are often of dubious quality, as discussed below.

The differences in literacy rate due to differences in approach to literacy measurement may also apply to monitoring over time in the same country when definitions or statistical practices are changed.

70. For enrolment, the source is generally administrative records but might well be surveys. The administrative records as a source have been criticized for their unreliability in both the India and Kenya studies. The latter observes:

> "Some of these (school statistics) are of very doubtful quality if the 1982 post-census survey is anything to go by. ... The results ... showed 9 per cent of the total number of schools reporting over 20 per cent more pupils than were found in the post-census survey. ... the worst figures were for South Nyanza where 38 per cent of the schools were found to have reported over 20 per cent more pupils than were found to be registered."

71. In spite of its wide usage, the percentage of primary school-age children enrolled in school is an especially poor indicator of education for several reasons, some of which are given in the India report. For instance, enrolment seems to be frequently inflated because of tie-ins with governmental subsidies or jobs. Also, pupils are often older than the age group assumed. Finally, enrolment is not the same as active attendance.

I. Employment, unemployment and underemployment

72. Problems of measurement in this area relate to unemployment and underemployment (in the sense of short-term and badly remunerated work and to work in relatively low-income circumstances). Indicators might take the form, for example, of the proportion unemployed (of those registered out of work and seeking employment) or the proportion in employment receiving less than a minimum income from their work (for whatever reason).

73. Concern is expressed in some of the case studies with problems of measurement. As noted in the Côte d'Ivoire study, "numerous ambiguities remain in this sector, for example as regards the real employment status of women and of children between 10 and 14 in both rural and urban areas; or on the degree of activity for those classified as active". Thus, in Côte d'Ivoire, women confronted with a single-choice classification, as in the population census, appeared to have classified themselves as housewives rather than as employed even when they had part-time work on farms. The permanent household survey in the Côte d'Ivoire avoided this mistake by noting both primary and secondary activities. The problem is not confined to women and children. It relates also to the many cases of multiple occupations in the informal sectors generally. How should one classify a small subsistence farmer who works his plot, trades on a small scale in cattle and receives much of his income from casual labouring in non-farm jobs? Rather than force him or her into an arbitrary category, a new category might be created which takes the multiple activity into account (e.g., subsistence farmer plus occasional labourer).

74. The Côte d'Ivoire study also refers to problems of defining unemployment without reference to income. Urban occasional labourers may spend all day working in their fashion for a pittance. The same may be true of farmers working on infertile soils. The usual criterion of employment/unemployment - namely, time spent - would not do justice to this situation. The question of combining employment with income data is taken up below.

J. Income, consumption expenditure and the retail price index

75. These items are not listed as such in the General Assembly resolutions. They are, none the less, closely tied to the objectives of the project. Changes in personal or household income (as distinct from the national-accounts concept of income, which bears little relation to a household's command over resources) or in real consumer expenditure may critically affect social behaviour. In the absence of free services, the ability to purchase housing or health may be crucial to survival. While this ability can sometimes be captured through non-monetary indicators, it is not always possible to do so in practice. As noted in the above paragraphs, also, employment cannot always be meaningfully separated from the remuneration for work. Employment and income must go hand in hand in analysis of social conditions.

76. The collection of household income and expenditure data present serious problems, however, particularly in subsistence societies. Conceptual problems arise because of the many goods and services that are self-produced, obtained through barter or provided free by the community. Practical problems arise because respondents cannot remember (or lack knowledge about other household members) and are unwilling to reveal sources of income. Some of these problems can be overcome by careful questioning of individual household members, by paying frequent visits to the household, by the use of diaries, or by the application of consistency checks, but the sheer bulk of the operation makes annual surveys of this kind impracticable for a great many countries.

77. There is clearly no easy solution. Full-scale expenditure surveys, required also for other purposes, might be conducted, on the Moroccan recommendation, every 10 years or so. For monitoring items that require more frequent information, questions might be inserted in the "light" survey on income (personal and household, in stated ranges) and related to employment so as to place it in a realistic setting. In both the India and Côte d'Ivoire studies, consumption expenditure is proposed as an indicator of income, using simplified questions. The point is made in the latter study, moreover, that if the same questions are put each year, changes might be detected even if the absolute data are inexact.

78. Simplified measures have been tested in India. Within the National Sample Survey operation two alternative schedules have been used: a longer one, combining household consumption expenditure and employment data and requiring about five hours per household; and a shorter one in which the interviewing time is reduced to about two and a half hours. Comparison of the data from the two schedules gave the following results:

(a) The pattern of distribution of the population by per capita expenditure groups ... are reasonably similar at the level of State estimates and, separately, for both the rural and the urban populations;

(b) Statistically significant differences were observed only at the regional level within states.

79. The authors conclude that although the results, based on limited experience, do not warrant a major change in the current survey schedules, "they are indicative of the possibilities of shortening the schedule for certain purposes, thereby raising the sample size that can be covered with given field-level resources".

80. The second suggestion made in the India case study is to ask a single question to obtain total consumption expenditure without going through the long list of items that now take up so much space in questionnaires. Preliminary tests at the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta show that the rankings of households based on a single question and on a detailed schedule were similar. Further testing is under way.

81. The retail price index is normally not an indicator in itself. It serves, rather, to adjust income and expenditure data in time series so that they express real, rather than monetary, change. However, as is implied in the India case study, in the absence of reliable income and expenditure data, changes in prices, particularly prices of crucial items such as staple foods, essential transport or medicines, might be significant in their own right. This is so because changes in incomes rarely match price changes. Certain groups, moreover, tend to suffer more than others. Price changes should therefore be included in a monitoring system.

K. Unitary indexes

82. A unitary, or summary index, combining several indicator values, is not proposed or favoured in the case studies. In spite of the attractions of a single measure, there are serious objections to it for measuring living conditions at the national or subnational level. The following passage from the Kenyan study expresses some of the reasons for the objections:

> "The districts that have the highest infant and child mortality rates also have the worst child malnutrition ... (and) the worst water situations, or the worst education indicators, but not always. It may not be easy to decide what weight to attach to different aspects of need ... It is not obvious that all would agree on the relevant weights or that this would be a trivial matter. It is also true that people may be deprived in some respects but not others. One may want to pay attention not just to the identification of populations in greatest need overall, but also to populations in greatest need in particular respects."

L. Perceived satisfaction and perceived dissatisfaction

83. It has been suggested above that questions should be asked of household respondents for their assessment of the adequacy/inadequacy of various relevant items such as housing, housing facilities, food consumption, household income, health services etc. It has also been suggested that they could be asked whether things in general were better in the current year than in the past. They could also be asked to identify their main dissatisfactions.

84. Only the Moroccan case study deals with the perception of satisfaction as a means of measuring qualitative indicators. The question is whether people are satisfied with their condition of life in general and/or with particular aspects, including the services provided by Governments. It is recommended in the Moroccan case study that questions on the degree of satisfaction be asked of a representative sample of the population, as part of ongoing surveys. There are several points to consider with regard to such survey questions:

(a) The formulation of the questions needs careful consideration and testing. The replies depend on the respondents' range of experience, their ways of thinking and their comprehension of the terms used in the questions. Respondents cannot give meaningful answers on subjects beyond their experience. (On the other hand they can be very vocal on concrete matters of daily life.) They cannot give meaningful answers if the questions are not translated with the same meaning into their own language. (Is there, for example, a precise word for "satisfaction"?);

(b) Perceived satisfaction should be weighed against objective change, where possible;

(c) If questions on satisfaction/dissatisfaction are asked in the context of household surveys, they should be addressed to all adults and not only to the heads of household. Women may have different views from men, or the young from the elderly.

85. How to gauge levels of satisfaction, regularly and systematically, in developing countries remains a matter for further experimentation in a variety of countries, settings and conditions.

IV. DISAGGREGATION

86. Disaggregation - the subdivision of national totals into discrete categories - plays an especially important role in data collection for qualitative indicators. Typical categories are regions or districts within a country, men and women, age groups, socio-economic categories and occupational categories. The purpose of disaggregation as described, for example, in the Kenya and India studies has been to obtain data for areas suitable for planning. The argument for disaggregation to district level in Kenya is that "it is politically difficult to allocate significantly more resources to particular provinces. It is much easier politically to argue for a focus on a district that is particularly deprived."

87. The case studies indicate that the criteria according to which the data are disaggregated vary from one country to another, and that the categories may have to be compounded from several criteria. A simple distinction into urban/rural is rarely sufficient by itself. Thus, in one African country the commonly used major categories are: the capital city, other urban areas, commercial farming areas, subsistence farming areas. Both the urban and the rural categories have been further subdivided on the basis of other criteria.

88. In Côte d'Ivoire a meaningful subdivision is by region and within region by other criteria such as type of farming (for example, cotton farmers in the Savannah region). In the Moroccan case study it is proposed, after discussion with the Direction de l'aménagement du territoire, to base the classification on three criteria: geographical (plains, mountains, plateaux, large agglomerations, medium- and small-sized towns), economic (agriculture, whether production is intensive or extensive, commercial farming, industrial, touristic), and socio-cultural.

89. The aim in Kenya in recent years to disaggregate by districts, of which there are 41 (ranging in size from about 50,000 to 1 million) is in line with the Government's District Development Focus. In India, the trend in statistical work has been to disaggregate from state level down to districts and community development blocks since that is where it is believed that much of the planning should take place. The question that should be decided in each national context is whether all, or the same, data required for larger aggregates are necessary also for smaller units, with possibly different concerns.

90. Data on individuals should be broken down by sex as a matter of routine, where the breakdown is applicable. The division of households by sex of the head of household has not always been successful because of complexities in concepts and statistical practice. A classification of households should, however, distinguish, at the very least, households where the sole adult or the sole working person de facto is a woman. Other disaggregation would depend on the local context. Income (to distinguish the poor, however defined) and occupation are commonly used as criteria in socio-economic classifications. The India study refers to the problems of assessing the incomes of the affluent (for whom relatively large samples are required). For purposes of monitoring qualitative indicators, however, their incomes are not of major interest. Information is required instead on how the poor or those on the margins of poverty are faring. A detailed coverage of income distribution at the top of the scale is not so necessary for the purposes here.

91. As noted above, the implications of disaggregation are serious as regards surveys, less so for census and most administrative data. The required increase of sample size depends on the kind of disaggregation, particularly on the number of additional groups, the stratification used and the degree of homogeneity of each subgroup as compared to the total sample. In the most unfavourable case the required sample size would increase proportionately with an increase in the number of units (i.e., it would need to treble if data are required separately for three subgroups). Obviously, the increase in sample entails considerable costs in money and staff.

92. In India, the recent (1987/88) sample size in National Sample Survey operations for the quinquennial detailed consumer expenditure survey was about 130,000 households, enough to provide information at state level and for about 80 "regions". For corresponding data at the district level, Indian statisticians have proposed a sample twice as large. For the annual, less detailed consumer expenditure surveys, the sample is about 25,000 households, providing data only for the larger states.

93. In Kenya, the sample size of the standard surveys increased from 31,800 households (in 1975-1979) to 115,200 (1985-1989). This was a huge expansion over a relatively short period of time. It was a credit to the survey that "so much was achieved so relatively successfully at the field level. Given the resources available, it would have been quite impossible to achieve similar successes at processing and analysis stages as well."

V. PROCESSING AND ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

A. Data processing, analyses and reporting

94. Some of the problems mentioned in the Kenya case study are the inordinate time spent checking the data and correcting errors (often by consulting the original interview schedules), the relative slow pace of data entry, file management, insufficient capacity of the hardware, and unsuitability of software to cope with the expansion. Of the 11 major surveys during the 1980-1984 programme, six had not produced results by 1990. Kenya is not unique in this respect. Nor is the problem of processing in Kenya confined to survey data. As noted above, there have been serious delays in issuing census reports, and the latest comprehensive reports on school statistics from administrative sources available in 1988 date from 1983, although the figures have been collected annually to the present. Serious staffing difficulties also arose in analysis of data and in reporting.

B. Central oversight and co-ordination

95. The successful execution of a programme to collect, process, analyse and distribute data on a select number of indicators of living conditions would seem to call for a single central co-ordinating body covering several interests: development planning, statistical operations, substantive analysis and sectoral policy-making.

96. The Government of Morocco (as a result of the present project) has established a National Committee of Co-ordination in which the ministries with an interest in social monitoring are represented. Within the Committee, six sectoral commissions, each composed of representatives of the relevant ministries (health and social services, for example) and in some cases of non-governmental agencies (such as the family planning association) have been set up. These deal at a technical level with education; health and clothing; employment and vocational training; food and nutrition; housing and environment; social services, transport and communication. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Statistics, who at the same time is a high official in the Planning Ministry.

97. The study of Côte d'Ivoire contains other suggestions for the means of co-ordination. It concludes that many of the formal co-ordinating bodies have been unsuccessful, that they have had no real powers and no continuity, that their composition has been determined more by administrative convenience than interest in the subject matter. The committees that functioned relatively well had the following features:

(a) Co-ordination between interested parties (e.g., the various potential users and the statistical offices) took place through informal working groups, set up on an ad hoc basis solely for the purpose of a particular enquiry, on the initiative of one of the concerned agencies;

(b) The working group was set up at the very start of an operation;

(c) The group was composed of persons with professional competence in the topic under discussion;

(d) Discussions took place on the basis of carefully prepared agenda, with concrete propositions that took into account the interests and competence of each participating agency.

98. The organizational framework described here seemed to have worked reasonably well in the preparation of surveys of employment and training and of an enquiry into the informal sector in Côte d'Ivoire.

99. The location of any central body for assessment and monitoring of living conditions can be a problem. There are arguments for the president's or prime minister's office; the planning office (if it covers social development as well as economic development); the statistical office, which must bear the brunt of the work; or for a separate semi-public body which could resist the pressures of special interests and achieve a scientific neutrality.

C. The role of the international community

100. The international community, including agencies in the United Nations system, bilateral agencies and foreign academic bodies, has need of statistics from developing countries, often on an ad hoc basis and on a variety of themes. The response can be both favourable and unfavourable. In the case of Kenya, the assistance provided by international agencies and by some foreign universities in the execution of surveys and in the analysis and dissemination of results appears to have substantially benefited some of Kenya's statistical work in the 1970s. At other times the assistance provided by foreign agencies, often supported by more liberal funding than was available to Governments and with a different set of priorities, was said to carry the risk of distorting national priorities.

> "Aid agencies push inappropriate technology too fast and too soon. Aid agencies offer large quantities of technical assistance and other external resources to enable countries to undertake programmes that are too ambitious for them to undertake otherwise. ... The emphasis on short-term results

> conflicts with medium- and long-term development of statistical capacity. ... Given the way that donors operate, a heavy reliance on donors makes it difficult for the government to undertake a continuing programme of data collection ... Thus longer-term series, and basic information that is useful to the government, more generally, get low priority."

This commentary is from the Kenyan case study. Other case studies do not go into this problem.

VI. PREPARATIONS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL MEETING ON INDICATORS OF PATTERNS OF CONSUMPTION

101. At its last session the Working Group of the Statistical Commission also requested that the Commission be informed of the progress of preparations for the international statistical meeting on indicators of patterns of consumption, planned to be held in Morocco. Nine agencies and offices of the United Nations met in Geneva on 16 May 1990 to discuss preparations for the Morocco meeting. It was decided that the meeting should take place at Rabat in April 1991. Participants would include selected experts on the methodology of measuring levels of living, representatives of the United Nations offices and specialized agencies working in the field, a small number of policy makers and senior statisticians from developing countries, and members of the Statistical Commission wishing to attend.

Notes

1/ See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1987, Supplement No. 6 (E/1987/19), para. 140 (e) and Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1989, Supplement No. 3 (E/1989/21), chap. I, draft resolution II.

2/ N. S. Sastry, "Household surveys in India: quality of data collected and their usefulness for planning and policy purposes", in OECD Development Centre, Multipurpose Household Surveys in Developing Countries (Paris, 1978).

3/ The 1981/82 survey referred to has not yet been published.